Former Magnetic Fields artist Andrew Morris answers our questions on Kid Chaos!

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Chatting to Andrew after finishing my Kid Chaos retrospective video, a number of interesting details emerged that I realised hadn't been addressed, so we felt it would be worth doing a follow up to cover all the bases.

I also opened up the panel to the English Amiga Board community to inject some fresh ideas that hadn't occurred to me (thanks Vulture and Gzegzolka). Here's what we came up with between us...

Q. What tools/programs/graphic editors were used while creating Kid Chaos? Which of these had to be custom made by Shaun and how user-friendly were they?

A. We used DPaint to do all the main graphics. To do the backdrops, which were in a large amount of colours, took a lot of work as there couldn't be more than 3 colours on one line. So I got Shaun to write a utility that checked the lines for colours and gave me a number of how many there were. I then had to painstakingly alter the image. It was hugely time-consuming as some of the backdrops were made up of multiple images. I seem to remember some sort of animation utility that worked alongside DPaint.

Q. Did a playable demo or rolling preview of Cosmic Kitten exist before the character was axed? If so, was it intended only to be used internally by Magnetic Fields, or distributed to the press?

A. Yes, Cosmic Kitten was fully designed. Ocean saw the game with him in and were involved in the change to Kid.

Q. Was your Cosmic Kitten sketch shown to many people for marketing reasons or to seek feedback?

A. Aside from Shaun, you're probably only the third or fourth person to see it. I'm glad the character gets a life, of sorts, in your video. I hope any fans of the game or just retro computing generally enjoy it.
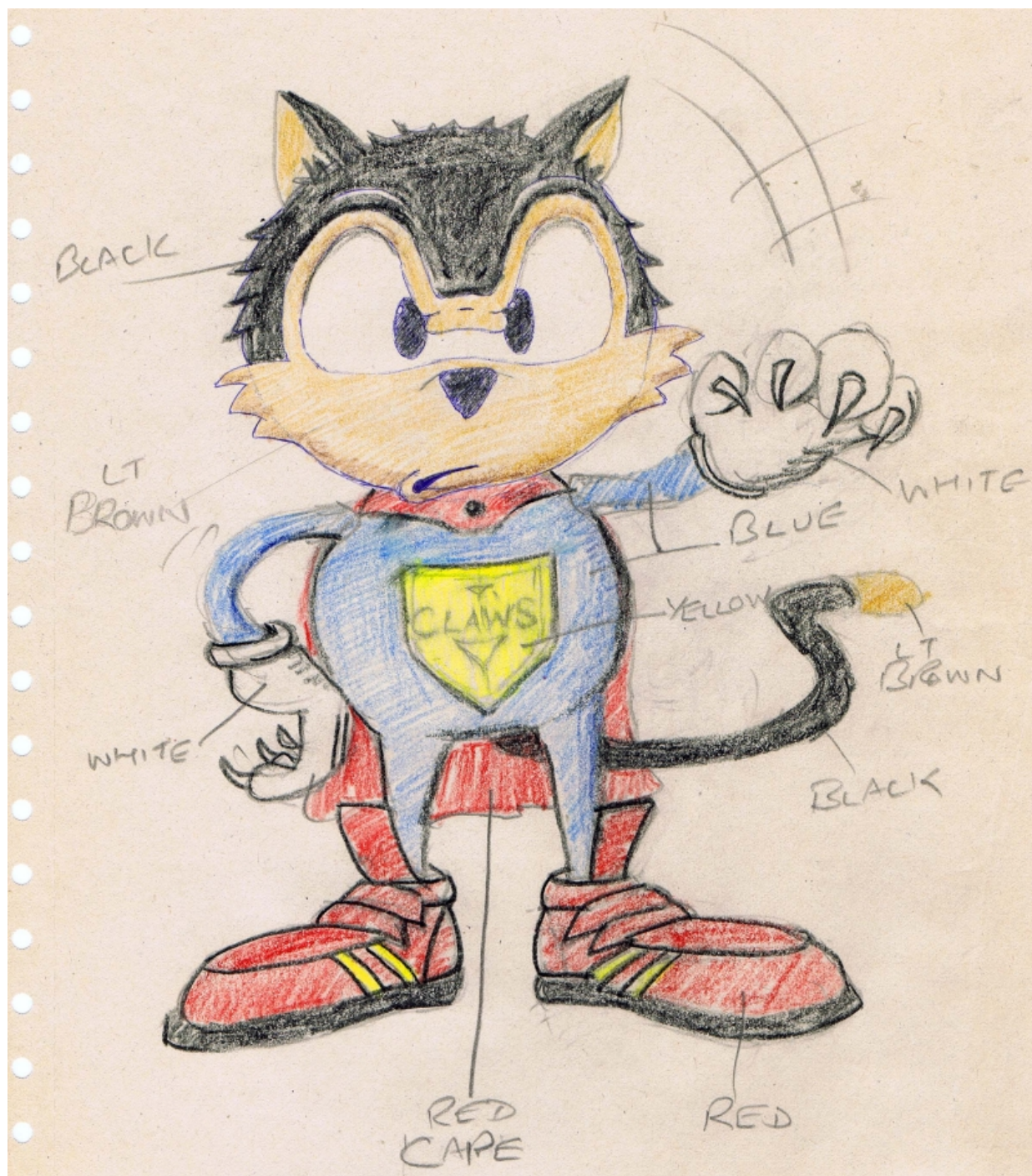
DK: Even though I'm useless at Kid Chaos it's nice to see it being appreciated all these years later elsewhere, more so than at the time of release. It's earned a respectable score over at Lemon Amiga for instance, thanks to the ratings of more competent gamers.

As for Claws, I think he's brilliant! This is exactly what Amiga gamers were chasing. He has a catchy, cool name and the guy oozes charm and personality. It's also refreshing to see he wasn't to be Clawz with a z.

I can definitely see why Andrew and Shaun wouldn't want to tempt fate and SEGA's wrath by running with him though. Imagine going through all that they did to get Kid Chaos released only to have it pulled from the shelves for copyright reasons. It would be a rehash of the Great Giana Sisters scenario.

Then again, think of the free publicity, and the game would be so rare today you could sell copies on eBay for £500 apiece. :D

Claws reminds me a bit of when Superman or Spiderman went dark, and we had a facsimile of the original characters except in a black outfit and with more attitude and aggression. That would have been in an interesting angle to take ('Dark Sonic'), though of course with all the same legal issues. It has probably been done by now. I don't keep up with all the hedgehog news.

What would be a fun experiment is to splice the original character back into the game to see how much the switch influences our opinion of Kid Chaos. EAB member, earok, does that sort of thing with Amiga games. Food for thought.

Q. Do you still have the pixel art versions of Cosmic Kitten?

A. The kitten graphics probably exist still but it would be too hard to find them, they would be on old Amiga disks.

N.B. Screenshots of the digital sprite appeared in French Amiga magazine, Joystick (issue 43, October 1993). This completely escaped my notice - thanks go to Gzegzolka for pointing it out.

Q. Is it true that at one time Kid Chaos was to be a fox?

A. The character was never a fox.

NB: The fox comment in the video came from one of the previews published in 1994, however, I get the impression that the critic involved misinterpreted the description of the character intended to be Cosmic Kitten.

With 20/20 hindsight and reading a lot of old magazines as I do, I know that journalists misreported plenty of things back then, what with tight deadlines and no internet/easy communication tools to rely on.

That's interesting in itself - comparing game manuals to critic's interpretation of what was happening on screen. Maybe only interesting to me actually. In this case, a PDF of the manual doesn't appear to be in circulation so I was out of luck there.

Q. Did you experiment with any other protagonist sprites?

A. I did try a few characters, can't remember how we settled on the caveman, I think it may have been Ocean's input.

As you can see, I toyed with the name 'Claws' at one point. There were other characters, one was called Captain Chaos, who was an alternative to Kid Chaos.

We probably moved away from the kitten because of the similarities to a hedgehog although I had considered animal characters years before Sonic but never did anything with them.

I think the Kid Chaos character could have worked well and been built up, he would be interesting in today's politically correct world.

DK: I don't think the caveman angle was necessarily a bad idea. A number of games made a success of that, particularly Chuck Rock I/II, Prehistorik, Ugh!, and BC Kid (aka Bonk). What these have in common is that they went down the cute/comedy route. Critics used to yawn at or mock the cute overload and bad jokes/puns, but I think as kids we were more receptive than the (mostly) adults reviewing them.

Yes, there was definitely scope to flesh out Kid Chaos. Some developers spun off their characters into paper-based comic strips that featured in Look-In or Fast Forward magazine, for instance. Zool had a few fictional books dedicated to him. Others talked about creating animated shorts for mainstream TV, though off the top of my head I can't think of an *Amiga* example where that got off the ground. RoboCod was probably the closest we came.

Coincidentally a PD AMOS game called Klawz the Cat was released for the Amiga in January 1994. Armed with a truncheon you're tasked with battling against Robodogs in the run-up to defeating Billy Bender who has catnapped your girlfriend. The One awarded it an underwhelming 50%. Amiga Power weren't impressed either dismissing the dishevelled moggy with a 2 out of 5 verdict.

Whilst hardly a triple-A title, I suspect this might have taken the wind out of Cosmic Kitten's sails if he had made it to game shop shelves in his original form. At the very least Amiga Power would have eeked out a few one-liners from the inevitable comparison.

Q. Did any of the assets have to be cut to ensure Kid Chaos was released on time? If so were these sprites, frames of animation, level furniture/decorations/themes, gameplay mechanics, or something else?

A. For much of the development, it was assumed Gremlin would take the game because they had published our previous releases and knew what we were working on. But they had their own platform game, Zool, and it was decided we should look for a different publisher.

When Ocean saw the game, it was almost completely finished so nothing was scrapped. Most of the work revolved around changing the character to something they liked.

Q. How many people were assigned to testing the game? Were they checking for an appropriate or smooth difficulty curve, or only to make sure the levels functioned correctly? Would cheats have been used to achieve this?

A. We did a lot of the testing ourselves but tried it on friends of the company. Ocean also did some testing and they were very happy with it. I was conscious that, years before, we had released the Amiga version of Super Scramble Simulator in a ridiculously unplayable form.

The programmer became very good at it and, despite my protestations, would not make it easier so, when it was released, no one could play it and it suffered badly. I was determined that Kid would be fun to play and not get too hard, at least until the later levels. It was expansive enough to allow the earlier levels to be easy, there was so much game there. It was almost like the sequel was included.

Q. It has been suggested that the later levels were too tough. Would you agree?

A. I would disagree, at least in the early to mid-stages. I haven't played the game since it was released so it would be interesting to try. I wanted there to be 'layers' of challenge, so you could complete a level with reasonable ease. But then there would be hidden sections that would take time and skill to find and complete.

You also had the password system, which meant you didn't have to start from the beginning. I didn't want frustrating mistakes meaning you had to start from the beginning again.

Q. Was NTSC compatibility a consideration while you were creating Kid Chaos?

A. I can't remember but probably, yes.

Q. Do you feel that once a schedule had been agreed with Ocean you had the time to cram everything in that you wanted to?

A. Yes. If anything, I made the game too big. I had ideas for scenarios I was determined to see included. When I look back at what was there - compared to, say, Lotus or Super Cars it was truly epic. It should have been two games.

Q. Is there anything you would have done differently with hindsight? Would you have called off the project altogether?

A. I think my original character was better. I had always wanted to do an animal-based platform game, probably going back to Monty Mole. I don't clearly remember the process that had us changing the protagonist so maybe I'd have insisted we stayed with Cosmic Kitten.

Given the comments, maybe it should have been a bit easier, although I do wonder if fans of the genre are making these comments. I should probably have limited the levels too.

It was a labour of love that should probably have been rushed out (or called off) about 12 months sooner but I was always a perfectionist, I had an idea for what the game would

be and prioritised that over commercial reality. It's something I learnt from.

Q. Did you hear from the pirates who cracked it at all? Were you aware at the time that this was inevitable, or did it come as a nasty surprise?

A. We hoped it wouldn't happen for a few weeks but the day after release, someone contacted us to say they already had a cracked copy and we knew we'd never see any money beyond the small up-front payment. That was sad.


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Q. Who devised the time travel plot?

A. I do remember adding the intro text at the start of the game to try to pull things together with a coherent narrative.

DK: My comment regarding the premise possibly being tacked on at the last minute emanated from reading another preview (see The One issue 70, July 1994).

Ocean's PR guy, Nick Clarkson, had gone to visit the magazine offices to work with them on a promotional article, but couldn't reveal the game's plot when it was published because it didn't appear to have one at that stage.

In time for the review, he'd been back in touch to deliver the caveman scenario. Talking/joking about the lack of a story covered a couple of paragraphs in each case so I thought it was worth mentioning.

Maybe the backstory had been settled on months previously and Nick was just unprepared. I suppose if it really *was* switched at the 11th hour, any ideas pinned down prior to this would have flown out of the window.

Q. Did you think about creating a floppy disk-based AGA version for the A1200?

A. I don't think we did.

Q. Have you considered reviving any of your Amiga games via modern platforms?

A. We are periodically approached about releasing our old games. Shaun and I jointly own the IP on everything. We might do something in future. I *did* see Lotus on the iPhone and we looked at releasing that but it would need the Lotus imagery removed.
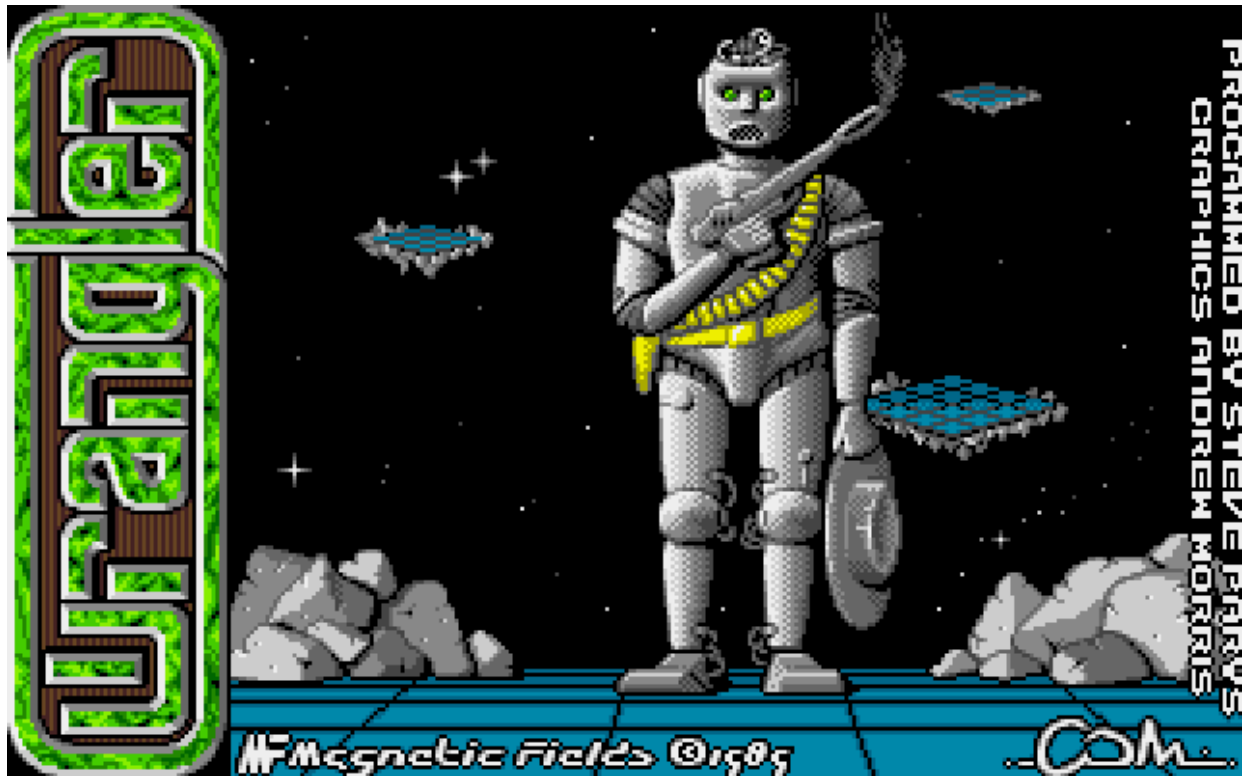
We'd like to take the opportunity to thank Andrew for giving up his limited time to answer our questions, and for granting permission to allow me to include Claws in the video. It's much appreciated. :)